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VIGNETTES

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Cultural Aspects in Doing Business Overseas

by Mary E. Lassanyi

Throughout the world marketing has become more consumer oriented and competitive. Reasons include changing lifestyles and incomes; growing awareness of health issues; demand for products lower in sodium, fat, cholesterol; and concerns about food labeling.

Cultural factors have altered the patterns of doing business overseas. Exporting to foreign countries requires not only legal, financial, and marketing information, but also knowledge of the customs in the recipient country.

Styles of doing business overseas vary to a great extent from country to country. Conducting business can be a complicated activity between individuals or groups from the same nation; it is even more complicated across cultures. Lack of understanding of cultural variables can prevent business firms from accomplishing their objectives.

Competition in the international markets is an important reason for U.S. companies to consider and heed cultural variables and to learn foreign languages. Business executives who pay little or no attention to cultural differences will learn soon enough that culture affects global marketing and also determines perception of a product. Western business people need to learn about the other country's culture, to adapt to cultural differences, and to be receptive to local behavior. Areas of possible concern include: business manners and methods, punctuality and courtesy, religious customs, dietary practices, and dress code. Also important are gift-giving customs, negotiating styles, greetings, customs regarding titles, and meanings of colors and numbers.

Despite certain cultural similarities, each country has a number of distinct traditions. For example: Standing too far from a Saudi Arabian or too close to a person from Spain can be interpreted by both as lack of interest. Germans, Japanese, and Romanians are very punctual, while people from the Latin countries have a more relaxed attitude toward time. When invited to a Japanese home, offer a small gift, but do not wrap it in white paper, as that is a sign of death. Avoid using triangular shapes in Hong Kong, Korea, or Taiwan, where the triangle is considered a negative shape. Taking time to learn about the culture of a country can only be beneficial to U.S. businesses.

Various public and private organizations conduct seminars on cross cultural do's and don'ts in doing business overseas. Many community and state colleges and universities have incorporated in their international business curricula such topics as, "global perspective of understanding of the cultural environment of multinational business"; and the "importance of language and culture in developing the marketing skills needed to penetrate international markets".

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Listed below are cross cultural consulting/training firms and information sources on cultural aspects of international business. Mention of companies does not imply recommendation or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) over others not mentioned.

Consulting Training Firms

CHP International, Inc.
1040 North Blvd.
Oak Park, IL 60301
Tel: 708-848-9650
FAX: 708-848-3191

Cooperative Business International
1401 New York Ave., NW, Ste. 1100
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-638-0926
FAX: 202-638-1374

International Marketing Institute
314 Hammond St., Ste. 52
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167-1206
Tel: 617-552-8690
FAX: 617-552-2590

International Training Associates of Princeton
300 North Harrison St.
Princeton, NJ 08540
Tel: 609-921-1446

Janavaras & Associates Intl., Inc.
46 East 4th St., Ste. 1112
St. Paul, MN 55101
Tel: 612-298-1020
FAX: 612-298-0962

Pacific Horizon Marketing and Management
Part of the Frontier Resource Management Group
811 Big Horn Ave.
P.O. Box 118
Worland, WY 82401
Tel: 307-347-8207
FAX: 307-347-8805

Audiocassettes

- "Doing Business in Australia," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 221
- "Doing Business in France," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 218
- "Doing Business in Germany," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 217
- "Doing Business in Great Britain," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 216
- "Doing Business in Indonesia," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 215
- "Doing Business in Japan", 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 214
- "Doing Business in Korea," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 213
- "Doing Business in Malaysia," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 225
- "Doing Business in Mexico," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 224

- "Doing Business in the Philippines," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 223
- "Doing Business in Scandinavia," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 222
- "Doing Business in Singapore," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 220
- "Doing Business in the Soviet Union," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 219
- "Doing Business in Spain," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 212
- "Doing Business in Thailand," 1990.
NAL call no.: Audiocassette no. 211

Audiocassettes are published by and available from:

International Cultural Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 1038
Evanston, IL 60204
Tel: 1-800-626-2772

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Publications

Books

- Axtell, Roger E. *Do's and Taboos Around the World*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993.
- Axtell, Roger E. *Do's and Taboo's of Hosting International Visitors*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1990.
- Axtell, Roger E. *Gestures: The Do's and Taboo's of Body Language Around the World*. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1991.
- Binnendijk, Hans. (ed). *National Negotiating Style*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, 1987.
- Braganti, Nancy L. and Devine, Elizabeth. *The Traveler's Guide to European Customs and Manners*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
- Camenson, Blythe. *Working in the Persian Gulf*. Coral Springs, FL: Desert Diamond Books, 1991.
- Casson, Mark. *Enterprise and Competitiveness: Systems View of International Business*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Chambers, Kevin. *The Traveler's Guide to Asian Customs and Manners*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- *Country Business Guide Series: China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Mexico*. San Rafael, CA: Word Trade Press, 1994.
- Devine, Elizabeth and Nancy L. Braganti. *The Traveler's Guide to Latin American Customs and Manners*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
- Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Reed Hall. *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990.
- Hoecklin, Lisa. *Managing Cultural Differences: Strategies for Competitive Advantage*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1995.
- Kras, Eva S. *Management in Two Cultures: Bridging the Gap between U.S. and Mexican Managers*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1989.
- Ricks, David A. *Big Business Blunders: Mistakes in Multinational Marketing*. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1983.
- Rossman, Marlene L. *The International Business Woman: A Guide to Success in the Global Marketplace*. New York: Praeger Publishing, 1986.
- Snowden, Sondra. *The Global Edge: How Your Company Can Win in the International Marketplace*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Reports

Reports on business travel cover such topics as business etiquette, travel advisories and visas, list of national and religious holidays, business hours, and social aspects of doing business overseas.

- Azerbaijan - Business Etiquette. (IMI951206), 1995.
- Canada - Business Travel. Country Commercial Guides, Document ID 352. 1996.
- Latvia - Business Travel. Country Commercial Guides, Document ID 1076. 1995.
- Social Aspects of Doing Business in Kazakhstan. Document ID 2252. 1995.
- United Kingdom - Business Travel. Country Commercial Guides, Document ID 1964. 1996.
- Uruguay - Business Travel. Country Commercial Guides, Document ID 1981. 1995.

The reports are available on the National Trade Data Bank (NTDB), CD-ROM system. Contact: The National Technical Information Service (NTIS), tel: 703-487-4630.

They also are accessible on the STAT-USA World Wide Web site: <http://www.stat-usa.gov>. A one-year subscription to STAT-USA is \$150.00, or a 90-day subscription is \$50.00. For more information about STAT-USA, call 202-482-2164.

Items of Interest

Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office Opens in Miami

Staffed by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, the Agricultural Trade Office helps U.S. exporters take advantage of Caribbean Basin market opportunities. For more information contact Willis Collie, Head, U.S. Agricultural Trade Office, Caribbean Basin, 909 SE 1st Ave., Ste. 720, Miami, FL. 33131. Tel: 305-536-5300; FAX: 305-536-7577; E-mail: cbato@ibm.net.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), USDA - Reports

A copy of the FSIS Backgrounder "Revised Labeling Requirement for Fresh Raw Poultry Products" is available through the FSIS "FAST FAX" at 1-800-238-8281 (press 4004) or on the FSIS home page, at URL: <http://www.usda.gov/fsis>.

Annual reports: "Meat and Poultry Inspection 1995 Report of the Secretary of Agriculture to the U.S. Congress" and the 1995 FSIS Meat and Poultry Hotline Report, "Making the Connection: An Update", may be obtained by faxing your request to the Public Outreach and Communications Office at 202-720-9063.

Internet Access for International Business, Economics, Marketing and Trade Information

- "Agribusiness, Food Industry & Forestry Industry Associations on the Internet." Compiled by Carol Singer, February 1997.
URL: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/atmic/news/agriassn.htm>
- Asian American Publishing Group.
Focusing on trade information, this is a bi-weekly report of specific economic and business news and opportunities in Mainland China.
URL: <http://www.chinaneews-aapg.com/>
- Brazilian Business Directory On-line.
How to do business in Brazil. Includes financial data, business opportunities.
URL: <http://www.brabiz.com>
- Bureau of Export Administration, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.
This home page walks U.S. exporters through the process step-by-step, first to define their product through "commodity codes," and then to see which destinations require a special license for shipping their product.
URL: <http://www.bxa.doc.gov>
- Business Sydney Online.
A weekly business newspaper serving small and medium-sized companies, both public and private, in the Sydney and NSW business community. Includes selected articles from the paper.
URL: <http://www.businesssydney.com.au>
- China News.
Hong Kong's leading English language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*, is online; includes business news. Free registration required.
URL: <http://www.scmp.com/news>
- China Pages.
Links to Chinese businesses on the web.
URL: <http://www.chinapages.com>
- Commercial News USA (CNUSA).
Official publication of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Export marketing magazine featuring American products and services; also includes trade leads and a directory of exporters on the CNUSA site.
URL: <http://www.cnewsusa.com>
- Dun & Bradstreet International Directory.
Links to business directories from many countries.
URL: <http://justdo.com/international/index.html>

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- El Cronista-Argentine Economic Newspaper. In Spanish, includes MERCOSUR information. URL: <http://www.cronista.com.ar>
- Food Safety and Inspection Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture. URL: <http://www.usda.gov/fsis>
- Free Trade Area of the Americas 2005. An overview of the regional government initiative to achieve western hemisphere economic integration. URL: <http://www.ita.doc.gov/ftaa2005>
- Global Trade Center. Excellent information for people interested in global trade. Includes links to trade resources and sites worldwide as well as international business opportunities. URL: <http://www.tradezone.com>
- InAsia: Asia's Business Resource. Company listings, and business and trade information for 22 countries. Requires free registration. URL: <http://www.inasia.com>
- Indiaccess. Contains thousands of Indian businesses with details of their activity and key persons. India Yellow Pages, India Business Directory. URL: <http://www.indiaccess.com/main.html>
- International Trade Resource and Development Center. American International Market has developed a site that provides a clearinghouse of online international traders. URL: <http://soho.ios.com/~aim>
- The IPL Trade Directory. Business directory with free listings of over 50,000 companies from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico, U.S., and Canada. URL: <http://www.ipl.com.gt>
- Law Publications on Business in Ukraine. This site hosts a library of publications on business related matters in Ukraine. Each publication costs \$30.00. URL: <http://www.lawpublications.com>
- Mexico Travel/Vacation, Retirement, Business. Includes trade data, exporter directory, NAFTA information. URL: <http://www.mexconnect.com/>
- NetTrade Australian Trade and Travel. Has links to websites of Australian companies. URL: <http://www.nettrade.com.au>
- PAGINE GIALLE On Line. Contains information on over 3 million Italian companies based on the 1.700 Italian Yellow Pages categories. Available in Italian or English. URL: <http://www.paginegialle.it/>
- Politician Government Address Directory. Contains the addresses of national leaders and provincial governors worldwide. Included with each listing are the mail address, fax/phone numbers, and E-mail and Web pages, where applicable, for leaders from Afghanistan to Yugoslavia. URL: <http://www.trytel.com/~aberdeen/>
- Russia Today. A daily summary of current events, politics, and business reports in English. URL: <http://www.russiatoday.com>
- Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC) at Florida International University. AmericasNet. Targets its activities to Florida's business and public affairs community through a wide range of activities and products. Links to several hundred Internet sites on Latin America and the Caribbean, including many sites specializing in trade and business issues. URL: <http://americas.fiu.edu>
- Thomas Food Industry Register. URL: <http://www.tfir.com:8500/index-new.html>
- Today's Market Prices. Provides wholesale fruits and vegetables market prices from USA, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, classified by product, origin, and sizes. URL: <http://www.todaymarket.com>
- Thai Index. Features company listings, business news, chambers of commerce, embassies, and Board of Investment. URL: <http://www.thaiindex.com>

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- **TRACKING US TRADE.**
A trade news service for journalists and the business community engaged in tracking trade with the Western Hemisphere.
URL: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/cswht/tradeindex.html>
- **UkraiNET Ukrainian Resource Directory.**
A resource directory with travel, tours, politics, investing, industries, businesses, economy, legal assistance, religion, and culture.
URL: <http://www.ukrainet.org>
- **Web Trade Directory - Hong Kong/China.**
A comprehensive business directory for Hong Kong and China with company listings, trade offices and consulates, business information plus much more.
URL: <http://www.webtrade.com.hk>
- **Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA).**
Conducts foreign market development programs on behalf of agri-businesses in 12 Western states. Lists WUSATA's export programs, export assistance, newsletter, publications, and related sites.
URL: <http://www.wusata.org>
- **WTDB - China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Business.**
Includes China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong companies, trade shows, trade and investment opportunities, business laws, economic daily news, marketing report, credit report, and China advertising service.
URL: <http://www.wtddb.com/>

Publications

Books/Directories/Guides

- *Africa South of the Sahara, 1997.* London, UK: Europa Publications, 26th edition. 1996. Cost: \$350.00.
- *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 1997.* London, UK: Europa Publications, 3rd edition. 1996. Cost: \$425.00.
- *The Far East and Australasia, 1997.* London, UK: Europa Publications, 28th edition. 1996. Cost: \$395.00.
- *The Middle East and North Africa, 1997.* London, UK: Europa Publications, 43rd edition. 1996. Cost: \$345.00.
- *South America, Central America and the Caribbean, 1997.* London, UK: Europa Publications, 6th edition. 1996. Cost: \$325.00.

For ordering information on the above publications, contact: European Business Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 891, Darien, CT 06820. Tel: 203-656-2701; FAX: 203-655-8332.

- *The Executive Guide to Asia-Pacific Communications — Doing Business Across the Pacific.* James, David L. New York: Kodansha America, Inc. 1995. Cost: \$16.00.

Order from: Kodansha America, Inc., 114 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011. Tel: 212-727-6460.

- *1996 Brazilian-American Who's Who.* Compiled by the Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce, Inc. New York: Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce, Inc. 1996. Cost: \$105.00.

Order from: Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce, Inc., FAX: 212-921-1078.

- *U.S. Companies with Offices in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Russian Far East).* Compiled by the American Embassy's Commercial Service Section. 1996. Cost: \$50.00 plus handling.

Order from: National Technical Information Service (NTIS), Springfield, VA. Tel: 703-487-4650; FAX: 703-321-8547.

Reports

- *Attaining Global Food Security by 2025.* Washington, DC: International Policy Council on Agriculture Food and Trade. Position Paper No.3, November 1996. 44pp. Cost: \$20.00.

See Publications, page 7

Order from: Chris Schrader, International Policy Council on Agriculture Food and Trade, 1616 P St., NW, Ste. 100, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-328-5056; FAX: 202-328-5133.

U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)

For ordering information and cost of publications contact: U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015. Tel: 202-512-6000; FAX: 301-258-4066; TDD 301-413-0006.

- *Food Security. Preparations for the 1996 World Food Summit.* Washington, DC: National Security and International Affairs Division, GAO, November 1996. 52pp. Report No. GAO/NSIAD-97-44.
- *Foreign Affairs. Perspectives on Foreign Affairs Programs and Structures.* Washington, DC: National Security and International Affairs Division, GAO, November 1996. 29pp. Report No. GAO/NSIAD-97-6.
- *Timber Management. Opportunities to Limit Future Liability for Suspended or Canceled Timber Sale Contracts.* Washington, DC: Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, GAO, October 1996. 26pp. Report No. GAO/RCED-97-14.

Articles of Interest

- "China Changes Food Labeling Rules." Lyon, Jess. *AgExporter*, VIII(8):6-8. November 1996.
- "Export Markets Respond to Crispy Appeal of U.S. Potato Chips." *AgExporter*, VIII(8):23-26. November 1996.
- "Fact File: Agricultural Trade Offices - A Starting Point for U.S. Exporters." *AgExporter*, VIII(7):13-17. October 1996.
- "FAS Satellite Imagery Group: Keeping an Eye on Crops Around the World." *AgExporter*, VIII(8):4-5. November 1996.
- "Japan Buys Into Organics." Jenni, Jon K. *AgExporter*, VIII(7):20-22. October 1996.
- "U.A.E.: Gateway to Other Markets." Porter, Ed. *AgExporter*, VIII(8):15-16. November 1996.
- "World Food Summit Focuses on Ending Hunger and Malnutrition." *AgExporter*, VIII(8):19-20. November 1996.

The *AgExporter* Magazine is published by the Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC.

Order from: National Technical Information Service (NTIS), Subscription Section, Springfield, VA 22161. Tel: 703-487-4630; TDD 703-487-4639. Price: \$51.00 domestic; \$59.00 foreign.

Conferences/Meetings/Seminars/Trade Shows

Trade Shows

International Food and Beverage Shows and Sales Missions are sponsored by the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. For additional information on the events listed below, please contact: USDA Trade Show Office, Foreign Agricultural Service, AgBox 1052, Washington, DC 20250-1052. Tel: 202-690-1182; FAX: 202-690-4374; and /or the contact listed under a specific trade show.

1997

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|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March 18-21 | GastroNord'97 , Stockholmsmassan, Stockholm, Sweden. Contact: Foreign Agricultural Service, American Embassy, Strandvagen 101, S-115 89 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: 011-468-783-5391; FAX: 011-468-662-8495. |
| May 6-9 | HOFEX'97 , Hong Kong Convention Center, Hong Kong. Contact: Hong Kong Exhibition Services 901-902. 9/F, Shiu Lam Building, 23 Luard Rd., Wanchai, Hong Kong. Tel: 011-2804-1500; FAX: 011-2528-3103. |
| May 10-14 | Alimentaria'97 , Lisbon, Portugal. Contact: Office of the Agricultural Counselor, Av. Das Forcas Armadas, Lisbon, Portugal 1600. Tel: 011-351-770-2358; FAX: 011-351-726-9721. |

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- June 5-8 **International Food & Hospitality'97**, Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, Bangkok, Thailand. Contact: Ellen Wong, Commerce Tours International, Inc., 870 Market St., Ste. 920, San Francisco, CA 94102. Tel: 415-433-3072; FAX: 415-433-2820. USDA Contact: Tobitha Jones, tel: 202-690-1182.
- August 26-29 **Food & Hotel China**, Shanghai, China. Contact: Commerce Tours International, Inc., 870 Market St., Ste. 920, San Francisco, CA 94102. Tel: 415-433-3072; FAX: 415-433-2820.
- September 7-10 **Fine Food'97**, Melbourne Exhibition Center, Melbourne, Australia. Contact: Australian Exhibition Services Pty. Ltd., Illoura Plaza, 424 St. Kilda Rd., Melbourne, Victoria 3004. Tel: 011-03-9867-4500; FAX: 011-03-9867-7981.
- October 2-7 **POLAGRA '97**, Poznan, Poland. Contact: Agricultural Office, American Embassy, Al Ujazdowskie 29/31, 00-540 Warsaw, Poland. Tel: 011-4822-621-3926; FAX: 011-4822-628-1172. USDA contact: Maria Nemeth-Ek, tel: 202-720-3623.
- October 11-16 **ANUGA'97**, Cologne, Germany. Contact: Teresina M. Leslie, USDA. Tel: 202-720-9423; FAX: 202-690-4374.

Other Trade Shows/Conferences/Meetings

1997

- March 3-4 **Food In A Borderless World**, Marriott Hotel, Des Moines, Iowa. Sponsored by the National Forum for Agriculture. Contact: Debra Schmidt, Iowa State University, ECE, 102 Scheman Bldg., Ames IA 50011-1112. Tel: 515-294-5961; FAX: 515-294-6223.
- May 7-10 **SEOUL FOOD '97**, Korea Exhibition Center, Seoul, Korea. Contact: Linda Butterfield, Korea Trade Center, Chicago, 111 E. Wacker Dr., Ste. 2229, Chicago, IL 60601. Tel: 312-644-4323; FAX: 312-644-4879.
- May 12-13 **AGRICULTURE**, the FTAA & the WTO, Trading Arrangements in the Americas and the World Trade Organization. Conference held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Contact: International Policy Council on Agriculture, Food and Trade, 1616 P St., NW, Ste. 100, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-328-5056; FAX: 202-328-5133.

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Vignettes is edited and compiled by:
Mary Lassanyi,
Coordinator, ATMIC

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